NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

My apologies for the non-production of the October Naturalist. My computer crashed the day before going away on holiday and it has taken some time to get started again with a new one. Hence the combined October-November-December issue.

MULLUNGDUNG STATE FOREST

Just eight members gathered at Gormandale on Saturday 28th September for our Mullungdung State Forest excursion. Others may have been diverted by the AFL Grand Final or deterred by the wet, blustery weather (equinoxial gales perhaps?), the effects of which were to disrupt our best-laid plans later in the day. Your scribe led the excursion, with Ken Harris' botanical expertise adding greatly to our appreciation of the plant diversity following good winter/spring rains in the region. Quite a contrast with the parched conditions for our club's October 2008 excursion, when plants in flower were few and far between.

Our convoy entered the state forest via Pogues Rd, making our first stop on the eastern side of the gully on Anzac Rd. We were greeted by carpets of Caladenias of the "fingers" group, and identified four species in flower – Pink Fingers *Caladenia carnea*, the typically slightly larger flowered White Fingers *C. catenata*, Tiny Fingers *C. pusilla* and Musky Caladenia *C. gracilis* with dorsal sepal strongly hooded over the column. Ken identified leaves of what would previously been a fifth Caladenia, the Hare Orchid *Leptoceras menziesii*. Its new generic name derives from the Greek *lepto* = slender and *ceras* = a horn, a reference to its petals. (*Ref.* Jeanes and Backhouse, *Wild Orchids of Victoria*, 2006). It has a distinctive single bright green ovate-lanceolate ground-hugging leaf.

Other orchids in flower included a Leopard Orchid *Diuris pardina* at the edge of the road, the less conspicuous Mayfly Orchid *Acianthus caudatus*, well spotted by Ron Carey, and the Waxlip *Glossodia major*. A Spotted Sun-orchid *Thelymitra ixioides* was identified from its bud.

The dominant eucalypt in this area is Messmate, but we spotted a Narrow-leaved Peppermint in the gully.

Here is a partial list of other plants found at our first site:

Holly Lomatia *L. ilicifolia*
Creamy Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*
Snow Daisy-bush *Olearia lirata*
Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata*
Guinea-flower *Hibbertia empetrifolia*
Centella *C. cordifolia*
Blue Bottle-daisy *Lagenophera stipitata*
Slender Bottle-daisy *L. gracilis*
(both only leaves thereof)
Varnish Wattle *Acacia verniciflua*
Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata* (in abundance)
Honey-pots *Acrotriche serrulata* (with masses of fruit)
Stinking Pennywort *Hydrocotyle laxiflora*
Spiny-headed Mat-rush *Lomandra longifolia ssp. Exilis* (with slender leaves)
Shiny Cassinia *Cassinia longifolia*
Small Poranthera *P. microphylla* (with five tiny white petals)
Tall Sundew *Drosera peltata ssp. auriculata* (abundant in flower)

We next proceeded to a small fire dam 700 metres further east on Anzac Rd., where we spotted some interesting ant hills in sandy soil near the water's edge. Some additions to our plant list:

Hedge Wattle *Acacia paradoxa* (abundant in area)
Creeping Bossiaea *B. prostrata*
Thatch Saw-sedge *Gahnia radula*
Screw Fern *Lindsaea linearis*
Paroo Lily *Dianella caerulea*
Burgan *Kunzea ericoides*
Hop Bitter-pea *Daviesia latifolia*
Small St John's Wort *Hypericum gramineum*
Common Flat-pea *Platylobium obtusangulum*

We also found the Slender Bottle-daisy in flower, distinctive with its white flower and black stem.

Our third location was at the intersection of Anzac Rd. and the grandly-named Harraps Hwy. To our list of orchids in flower we added the Wallflower Orchid *Diuris orientis* (two solitary plants) and our first Greenhood, tentatively the Tall Greenhood *Pterostylis melagramma*.

We also enjoyed an attractive patch of Leopard Orchids.

At this point our explorations were brought to an abrupt halt, as there were trees across both Anzac Rd to the east and Harraps Hwy. In view of the now driving rain and wind gusts, we decided to call it a day and not risk being blocked in. The wisdom of this was reinforced when we found a further tree down across Old Rosedale Rd to the south as we retreated. We had lunch together back at Pogues Rd before heading for home and shelter, having enjoyed a rewarding but shortened excursion.

Philip Rayment

SPRING CAMP SEPTEMBER 2013 AT BACCHUS MARSH

Out and about with Rohan Bugg

Saturday morning in and around the Brisbane Ranges.

Rohan's ability to impress with his mimicry of birds never ceases to amaze. He also has other tips for the aspiring "birdo" in identifying birds. Yellow-rumped Thornbills are "butterbums" and Long-billed Corellas are "cut throats' after obvious identifying features. He also demonstrated the surprised look of the Sparrowhawk to distinguish it from the frown of the Brown Goshawk as an aid to identification. A quick check of the field guide verifies these features.

It was a slow boat to the Brisbane Ranges with several stops along the way to look at birds and plants of interest. Our first stop was at a dam where the highlights included Hardheads, cut throats, a Black-fronted Dotterel and a pale morph of the Brown Falcon perched in the distance.

Wild flowers were out in profusion. Our walk down Shoot track yielded Sticky Boronia, *B. anemonifolia*, Rosy Baeckea. *B. ramosissima ssp. Ramosissima*, Brisbane Ranges Grevillea, *G. steiglitziana*, Heath Daisy-bush, *Olearia minor* and the Cypress Daisy-bush, *O. teretifolia*.



Grevillea steiglitziana *(Phil Rayment)*

On the steep track down to Sapling Gully we stopped to look at the paper–thin, foliated layers in an anticline. They were very delicate and gave the impression of the leaves of a book that had been exposed to the elements.

Our lunch stop was at Stony creek where honey-eaters abounded; Yellow-tufted, White-naped, Yellow-faced, White-plumed. Weebills, thornbills and White-throated Tree-creepers were common but no Brown Tree-creepers were to be seen. They used to be very common in this area but they didn't survive the catastrophic bush fires of a few years ago. Amongst the raptors were Brown Falcons, Wedge-tailed Eagles, Little Eagles and a Brown Goshawk, which brought a frown to Rohan's face. A great morning's birding with some interesting botany and geology thrown in.

Ken Savage, ably assisted by Steve & Goody Wilks and Fergus O'Gallagher.

Walk at Werribee Gorge State Park, Sunday morning 15 September 2013

A Little Eagle circled above and Eastern Spinebill, Brown-headed Honeyeater and Rufous Whistler started the morning's bird list as we gathered in the car park in beautifully calm and sunny weather. With Rohan Bugg leading, we set off from the Quarry Picnic Area to explore the Circuit Walk.

We ascended the rocky track into a dry woodland of scattered eucalypts: Red Box, Yellow Gum and Red Stringybark, many of them laden with Box Mistletoe. Shrubs included Fragrant Saltbush (*Rhagodia parabolica*) and Scented Groundsel (*Senecio odoratus*). The crushed leaves of Fragrant Saltbush are described as 'malodorous' in the *Flora of Victoria* and we felt that our description – that they smelled of dead fish – was appropriate. The common name applies to the flowers, which were not available to us. The rocky soil and deep layer of litter looked very dry to those of us accustomed to the Gippsland winter.

Higher up, some of us were puzzled about the identity of the swathes of low-growing tufts of daisy-like plants consisting of last season's withered stems along with fresh green growth, now in bud. These were eventually identified as Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*). Later in spring they will provide attractive sheets of colour with their clusters of pale yellow flowers. A Yellow Star (*Hypoxis vaginata var. brevistigmata*) shone from the shelter of one of the scattered patches of grass and moss. Inland Pigface (*Carpobrotus modestus*) with its striking purple flowers and the bright yellow shrubs of Variable Groundsel (*Senecio pinnatifolius*) in full bloom added to the colour and variety of the understory. A few shrubs of Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*) were scattered along the track.

The track flattened as we reached a largely cleared area of grasses and further swathes of Clustered Everlasting, Small-leaved Clematis and a few shrubs such as Golden Wattle and Wedge-leaf Hop-bush. This area was once part of Hanson's 24 ha farm, selected in 1871. The rich volcanic soils of these flatter areas were used to grow potatoes. The wide variety of wattles here included Varnish Wattle, Black Wattle and Lightwood. A stand of young White Cypress-pine, planted in 1987 to revegetate the area, flourished.

As we approached the Eastern Viewpoint and walked on to Picnic Point and the Western Viewpoint, under the shelter of mixed eucalypts a brilliant show of the Gold-dust Wattle combined with the bright yellow of the groundsel. These were accompanied by Long-leaved Dogwood, the salt bush Saloop (*Einadia hastata*), Grey Everlasting, Black-anther Flax-lily and *Pultenaea daphnoides*. In sheltered spots among the rocks and fallen branches were a few of the familiar mat-rushes and herbs we see in Gippsland.

The expansive view from Eastern Viewpoint encompassed parts of the State Park, nearby farmland, the blue hills on the distant horizon and the buildings of the Melbourne CBD. From Picnic Point, on the rim of Werribee Gorge, we viewed the rocky cliff across the gorge and the river far below us. From Western Viewpoint, looking across the deep valley of the Werribee River we saw the huge hump, known as The Island, between the Myrniong Creek and the Werribee River.

Birds identified along the walk included the Brown Goshawk, Striated Pardalote, Shining Bronze-cuckoo, Scarlet Robin, and the Weebill. Observation of the behaviour typical of the Weebill, that of fluttering outside foliage, helped confirm the identification of this tiny bird.

Ordovician sandstones and slates underlie the area. These were laid down under the sea 470-500 million years ago and since then have been folded, faulted, uplifted and eroded. These rocks can be seen on the cliffs of the gorge. Over these lie Permian tillite, sandstone and conglomerate, deposited by glaciers about 280 million years ago. Tillite contains rocks of various origins in a fine-grained matrix. Our track took us over these Permian rocks on either side of Picnic Point and across the basalt

capping at the point. Erosion by the rivers and creeks has removed much of the basalt and cut deep gorges and valleys exposing the Permian and Ordovician rocks. The basalt capping, and the rich volcanic soil in places, are what remains of lava flows from volcanoes in the area about three million years ago.

Margaret Rowe

Sunday afternoon along Werribee Gorge

After lunch we walked along the aqueduct, which had been built in 1904-1906 by a farmer so he could irrigate 100 acres of crops in Bacchus Marsh. Although refurbished in 1926-29 by the Water Commission it has now fallen into disuse and disrepair. It provided a convenient pathway into the gorge to reveal the interesting geology of the area. The sides of the gorge had a lot of tillite in them. Tillite is a conglomerate of fine glacial flour, pebbles and quite large rocks, deposited by successive ice layers about 280 million years ago. The horizontal scratches in the rocks were clear indicators of glacial movement. Further along the gorge was more evidence of the magnificent forces of nature at work. The originally flat layers were folded and tortured into stunning anticlines on the cliff face opposite.

There were caves at the top where a number of feral goats rested and the guano stains on the rocks indicated the presence of Peregrine Falcons although none were sighted. Amongst the birds were Mistletoe Birds and a cloud of Red-browed Firetails in the picnic area – a great way to finish the day.

Ken Savage, ably assisted by Steve & Goody Wilks and Fergus O'Gallagher.

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING HELD 23.9.2013

General Meetings & Excursions

Friday 25 October: Heart Morass – Matt Bowler

Saturday 26 October: Excursion to Heart Morass. Meet 9.30 at Lake Guthridge, Sale, or carpool 9am Traralgon Mexican Restaurant, corner Whittakers Rd & Hwy.

Friday 22 November: North East Passage – a modern voyage of discovery – Julie Parker

Saturday 23 November: *(Now Sunday 24th)* Bus Trip to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens. John Parker can drive. Need to book the Yinnar Community Bus.

Botany Group: Saturday 2 November – plant survey at Morwell River Falls. Meet there 10am. Possibility of BBQ lunch being provided. Contact: Wendy Savage ☎ 56342246.

Bird Group: Tuesday 12 November – EA Wetlands survey – please contact Alix in advance. Saturday 30 November - Bird Challenge Count Day. Contact Alix Williams ☎ 5127 3393, alixw@spin.net.au.

Finance – No balances as Treasurer away.

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

David Stickney suggests botany could use a microscope with camera attached which would allow digital images to be shown on screen. Botany group should discuss.

Bird identification guide for Latrobe Valley – waiting for reply from Kevin Roberts.

Future SEANA camp with Sale FNC in Spring 2016 – discussed dates for meeting to suit Sale club and Phil, Ken, David and Wendy.

Storage at Uniting Church – have measurements of equipment. Will buy a lockable office cupboard with adjustable shelves to house equipment and part of library.

Thompsons Reserve proposal – Max Thompson is preparing background on their community activities and written consent to use family name. Alix will contact Traralgon South District Association for support and is gathering material for Parks Vic application. She requests volunteers to put it together.

Crinigan Rd Public Open Day 22 September - Ken Harris led a walk of members of the Friends Group.

Edward Hunter Reserve development proposal – sent submission and were invited to a meeting with council and developer. Couldn't attend due to short notice.

Bird Challenge November 30. Some key people will be absent, but can't change weekend as Christmas party is December 7. May need to reduce sites. Could consider Sunday December 1 as Ken Harris would be available then.

Christmas Party to be at Phil and Gill's as David and Marlene will be away.

Spring Camp payment – hope to give some refunds for absences.

Conservation Matters

Nothing to report.

GUEST SPEAKER FOR NOVEMBER

Julie Parker has been an inveterate traveller since heading overseas in the early 1970s. Discovering there was so much to explore 'out there' she did not manage to return to Australia for several years and has maintained this interest ever since. The 26 day voyage she joined in August 2011 was the first general interest trip for which the Russian authorities had given permission in recent times.

Setting off from the ice free port of Murmansk the Akademik Shokalskiy traversed the north east passage through 9 time zones, 6 seas and 4,411 nautical miles crossing the Russian arctic to finish in the Bering Strait town of Anadyr.

Julie's presentation will cover the wildlife, plants, islands and indigenous people encountered on this modern day expedition.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

Merrin Spinaze from Bunyip has recently joined the LVFNC. We wish her a long and happy association with the club.

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING HELD 21.10.2013

General Meetings & Excursions

Friday 22 November: North East Passage – a modern voyage of discovery – Julie Parker

SUNDAY 24 November: **NOTE CHANGE OF DAY** (bus not available on Saturday). Bus Trip to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens. Leave Yinnar 8am, Churchill 8.15, Morwell 8.30, Moe 8.50, Trafalgar 9am, Yarragon 9.05, Warragul 9.20. Leave 3.30-4pm to return. Cost $15pp. Flora and fauna list available from Wendy by email.

Saturday 7 December: Club Christmas Party at Phil & Gill's from 12 noon.

Botany Group: No botany due to Bird Challenge. Contact: Wendy ☎ 5634 2246.

Bird Group: Saturday 30 November - Bird Challenge Count Day. Contact Alix Williams ☎ 5127 3393, alixw@spin.net.au.

Finance – Cash Mgt Trading A/c $3320.96. Term Deposit $13,909.18

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

Storage at Uniting Church – Traralgon Auctions have a new wardrobe which may be suitable for around $300. Will measure and see if it will fit in the available space.

Thompson Reserve proposal – waiting for response from Max. Alix met with Andy Gillham to look at history of reserve and its formation.

Morwell Football Ground Recreation area masterplan – this may impinge on the Eric Lubcke Yarra Gum Reserve. Community Meeting/Workshop 24 October. Written submissions by 30 Oct and an online survey on Latrobe City website. Marilyn Ingram will attend and find out what is planned.

Purple Diuris Count – Dawson 17 October, Longford 29 October.

VNPA Tidal River human sign 'Hands off Parks' with lights 2 Nov at 6.30pm.Ken Harris will go and can take 4 others.

Monash Uni Clayton request for 2 copies LVFNC history book.

Refunds for Spring Camp – we were only charged for actual nights spent and meals eaten so can refund those who could not attend or only stayed 2 nights.

Jean Galbraith program on Hindsight, Radio National 1pm Sunday 20 Oct by Brian McKenzie. Bon and Ollie are interviewed. David S will download and make available to members and to keep in club archives.

Program 2014 progress – Wildflower Walk in Baw Baw clashes with our summer camp. FOBB will arrange a Fungi Foray May 31,

2014 and our botany group will conduct the activity.

Naturalist for October has not been produced due to editor being away and her computer crashing, so suggest a combined Oct/Nov issue be produced.

Meredith Fletcher will attend meeting and requests Bart Sterkenberg paintings and photos of Jean Galbraith on club excursion.

Latrobe Catchment Landcare network early birdwatchers breakfast 24 Oct at Snape's property Willowgrove. Club to be paid $250 as run by club members.

BIRD CHALLENGE COUNT DAY

On **Saturday, November 30** LV Field Naturalists' Club members, their relatives, friends and anybody with an interest in birds is invited to take part in the Australia–wide, Bird Challenge Count Day.

The LVFNC have been participating in the Count since 1998 covering the area from Yarragon to Traralgon, Tyers to the Morwell National Park. Participants form groups with an experienced "bird" person as leader. They visit a series of sites to observe and count birds. Everyone can assist by spotting and counting birds and some people by also identifying them. It provides a great opportunity for people to learn about the local birds.

Data on the types and numbers of birds recorded are sent to Birdlife Australia. This information provides ideas about bird populations and movement in the area.

If you are interested in joining in the fun please make my life easier by **volunteering and letting me know early** (before the end of October) Thanks. Contact Alix on ☎ 5127 3393 or alixw@spin.net.au.

CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY

Saturday 7 December from 12 noon

At Phil and Gill's, 134 Ellavale Drive, Traralgon. BYO food and drinks and chair. BBQ, and boiling water for tea and coffee available. Punch and Christmas cake provided.

Ellavale Drive runs off McNairn Road near the Racecourse at the eastern end of Traralgon. Number 134 is right on the 3rd speed hump, just past Kangaroo Grass Rise.

SUMMER MEMBERS' NIGHT

Friday 10 January 2014.

Open theme – your chance to show and tell.

FOBB WILDFLOWER WALK 18 JAN

Meet 10am at Baw Baw Village main carpark. Moderate level of fitness is required. Contact Neville Daly ☎ 5628 4459

CLUB SUMMER CAMP AT DARGO RIVER INN

Friday 17 – Monday 20 January 2014 (3 nights)

Cost is $50pp/night for cabins and $15/night for powered site. Cabins have a lounge room, kitchen, shower, toilet, and separate bedrooms. All bedding and towels are supplied.

Camp is self catering. Cabins have a microwave and hotplate but no oven. Evening meals cannot be bought at the Dargo River Inn and they are not able to provide any evening meals. Meals can, however, be bought at the Dargo Hotel which is less than 2km away. Dargo Hotel will not take bookings, but we can arrange to go up at the same time and buy our own meals and put tables together for seating.

Names on list at GM or contact Wendy.



Snowy Mintbush, Prostanthera nivea, in Werribee Gorge. (Phil Rayment)

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL and thank you from the editor to all

contributors. Next Naturalist will be posted in early February.